

# Detachment 101 and North Burma: Historical Conditions for Future Unconventional Warfare Operations

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

Detachment 101 and North Burma: Historical Conditions for Future Unconventional Warfare Operations, by MAJ Steven J. Ackerson, 67 pages.

As military budgets and public support for conflict erode, unconventional warfare (UW) provides the US military with a method to affect strategy without committing significant blood and treasure. Although overt risks to force or mission may be lower with UW there are significant risks associated with this type of warfare. Historically, UW success or failure has often been contingent upon conditions in the operational environment. This monograph used a case study of Detachment 101, a subordinate element of the Office of Strategic Services, to test the hypothesis that an UW campaign's success is determined by how well UW operations exploit favorable conditions in the operational environment. North Burma, Detachment 101's area of operations and one of the most austere and unforgiving environments, delivers numerous examples of how the physical environment can create obstacles and opportunities for UW operations. Additionally, although contemporary UW operations are supported by far more advanced technology, Detachment 101's early UW operations also illustrate how enemy actions, conventional partner force capabilities and limitations, and indigenous populations can be manipulated or influenced by UW or Special Forces elements to achieve desired operational end states.

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## **Acronyms**

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ATC	Air Transport Command
CBI	China-Burma-India
CMO	Civil Military Operations
CNAC	China National Aviation Corporation
COI	Coordinator of Information
COL	Colonel
DET	Detachment
DoD	Department of Defense
FM	Field Manual
GEN	General
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq
JP	Joint Publication
LCDR	Lieutenant Commander
LOC	Line of Communication
LTG	Lieutenant General
NCAC	Northern Combat Area Combat
OG	Operational Group
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
SO	Special Operations
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces

US	United States
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare



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## Introduction

UW consists of operations and activities that are conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.

—JP 3-05, *Special Operations*

In December 2014, the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) published the Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) Operating Concept 2022. The document acknowledged that the changing fiscal environment will most likely limit the US Army and the US military's ability to execute large-scale prolonged operations.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, according to the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, to address both a smaller force size as well as budget, the US Army will place increased emphasis on “innovative, low-cost and small-footprint engagements across the globe.”<sup>2</sup> Although the US Army's regionally aligned forces provide the conventional force with a modest ability to increase engagements throughout the world, USASOC's Special Forces Groups are perhaps the only units that can provide the nation with the relatively low-cost and small-footprint engagements identified in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance.

US Army Special Forces units are trained, equipped, and manned to execute special warfare. According to the ADP 3-0, special warfare is lethal and nonlethal actions and activities executed by a highly trained and educated force, often with indigenous combat forces in “permissive, uncertain, or hostile” environments. Special warfare operations include “unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and/or counterinsurgency through and with

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<sup>1</sup> United States Army Special Operations Command, “ARSOF 2022,” Special Issue, *Special Warfare* 26, no. 2 (April-June 2013): 5.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Defense, *U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Defense Strategic Guidance (Washington, DC: January 2012), 3.

indigenous forces or personnel in sensitive and/or hostile environments.”<sup>3</sup> Since the events of September 11, 2001 Special Forces units, as well as the regular US Army, have significantly expanded and improved their knowledge and experience of foreign internal defense and counterinsurgency operations. However, operational training and experience in counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense was often at the expense of unconventional warfare. In 2010, LTG John Mulholland, the Commanding General of USASOC, acknowledged, “we have not invested adequate training and resources in developing and maintaining sufficient advanced capability to conduct UW or UW-related operations in sensitive environments or conditions.”<sup>4</sup>

In December 2014 the Obama Administration announced that the Department of Defense and coalition partners were working to train and equip moderate Syrian opposition fighters.<sup>5</sup> The DoD announced that by January 2016, several hundred trainers would be deployed to various sites to train vetted Syrian opposition fighters.<sup>6</sup> The stated goal of the US-lead training program was to train and equip five thousand moderate fighters that could be employed to fight ISIS.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately by September 2015, the United States had trained fewer than sixty fighters and only “four or five” were still available for military operations.<sup>8</sup> Although many of the details

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<sup>3</sup> Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Merton Woolard and Mark E. Cooper, “Expanding the UW Reach,” Special Issue, *Special Warfare* 24, no. 2 (March-April-May 2011): 19.

<sup>5</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Countering ISIS: Are We Making Progress?* 113 Cong., 2d sess., 2014, Serial No. 113-234, 16.

<sup>6</sup> John Kirby, Department of Defense Press Briefing by Rear Adm. Kirby in the Pentagon Briefing Room, Press Operations, January 16, 2015, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/DesktopModules/ArticleCS/Print.aspx?PortalId=1&ModuleId=1144&Article=606997>.

<sup>7</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Countering ISIS: Are We Making Progress?* 113 Cong., 2d sess., 2014, Serial No. 113-234, 37.

regarding US efforts to train Syrian opposition forces are still forthcoming, there appears to be real-world issues with executing contemporary unconventional operations. Why were recent efforts to train and equip an opposition force running into such trouble? Were there issues with the trainees or was the problem related to other conditions in the operational environment?

Since ARSOF 2022 was published, there has been a significant push throughout the Special Forces community to focus on the origin of Special Forces. From the restructuring of each Group's fourth battalion to a refocus on the human domain—USASOC has placed added value on studying past unconventional warfare and special operations to lead the way to future success.<sup>9</sup> As the predecessor of both the Central Intelligence Agency and US Army Special Forces, the World War II Office of Strategic Services, or OSS, has relevance to contemporary unconventional warfare. Kermit Roosevelt's introduction to the 1949 War Report of the OSS summarized the OSS's operations during World War II:

The purpose of the COI-OSS (Coordinator of Information-Office of Strategic Services) as originally conceived was to conduct propaganda, collect and analyze intelligence, and, in the event of war, wage unorthodox warfare in support of the armed forces. Such unorthodox warfare would include not only propaganda and intelligence but also sabotage, morale and physical subversion, guerrilla activities and development and support of underground and resistance groups.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the contemporary definition of UW, the World War II era OSS employed UW methods to complement conventional military operations in the European, North African, Mediterranean, and China-Burma-India Theaters. OSS agents trained and equipped guerrillas, partisans,

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<sup>8</sup> Lloyd Austin, "Testimony of GEN Lloyd Austin Before the Senate Armed Services Committee," (video of testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee, C-Span, September 16, 2015), accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.c-span.org/video/?328129-1/hearing-military-operations-islamic-state>.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Basquez, "Special Forces Returns to its Roots," *Special Warfare* 26, no. 4, (October-December 2013): 9.

<sup>10</sup> History Project, Strategic Services Unit, Kermit Roosevelt, United States, and Office of the Assistant Secretary of War, *War Report of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services)* (New York, NY: Walker & Company, 1976), 1.

underground and resistance elements, and other unconventional or irregulars that aided the war effort in enemy occupied territories.<sup>11</sup>

As military budgets and public support for conflict erode, UW provides the US military with a method to affect strategy without committing significant blood and treasure. Although overt risks to force or mission may be lower with UW, there are significant risks associated with this type of warfare. Because UW has the potential to alter the balance of power between sovereign states it presents significant risk in the international and domestic political arenas and requires sensitive execution and oversight.<sup>12</sup> Recent struggles with real world operations illustrate the difficulties associated with UW operations. The question becomes, how can USASOC and its subordinate elements execute UW while minimizing political and policy risks to the US government? The answer to this question may be found in the distant past. The OSS's Special Operations (SO) and Operational Group (OG) branch operations present relevant historical examples of how UW can succeed. OSS elements, employing UW techniques, created security issues behind enemy lines and eroded the enemy's power and will to fight.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, UW success or failure has often been contingent upon conditions in the operational environment. During successful UW operations, the following conditions have been traditionally met: the insurgency or resistance movement's objectives were compatible with US strategic objectives; the governing authority's ability to control the population, assets, and territory was vulnerable to UW; opposition groups were willing to partner with the US or others; and lastly, the environment was suitable for UW.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this paper hypothesizes that an UW

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<sup>11</sup> Strategic Service Field Manual, *Organization and Functions* (Washington, DC: Office of Strategic Services, 1945), 18.

<sup>12</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2-2.

<sup>13</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations*, II-8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II-10.

campaign's success is determined by how well UW operations exploit favorable conditions in the operational environment, e.g., the physical environment, the character of the enemy, the nature and sympathies of the people, and lastly conventional or supporting operations.

This monograph used a case study of DET 101's UW campaign in north Burma as a vehicle to test the hypothesis that an UW campaign's success is determined by how well UW operations exploit favorable conditions in the operational environment. As "the OSS element that most closely mirrors the mission and capabilities of today's Army Special Forces Group," DET 101's actions in north Burma provide relevant historical examples of how UW operations can achieve success under challenging conditions, with limited resources.<sup>15</sup> As one of the most austere and unforgiving operational environments, north Burma delivers numerous examples of how the physical environment can create obstacles and opportunities for UW operations. Although contemporary UW operations are supported by far more advanced technology, DET 101's early UW operations also illustrate how enemy actions, conventional partner force capabilities and limitations, and indigenous populations can be manipulated or influenced by UW or Special Forces elements to achieve desired operational end states.

This paper begins with a brief summary of the strategic conditions that affected operations in the China-Burma-India or CBI Theater as well as an overview of DET 101's operations. As a tertiary component of the war effort for the United States and Great Britain, operations in the CBI Theater were often overshadowed by actions in Europe and the Pacific.<sup>16</sup> As a result, resource shortfalls and differing national priorities often hampered conventional

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<sup>15</sup> United States Army Special Operations Command, "Detachment 101," The OSS Primer, last modified December 15, 2015, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.soc.mil/OSS/det-101.html>.

<sup>16</sup> John Whiteclay Chambers, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 387.

operations and threatened unity of effort, particularly in Burma.<sup>17</sup> After examining the differing national priorities and the overall Allied offensive planned for the spring of 1944, this section then focuses on the operations that the US-led Northern Combat Area Command or NCAC executed in north Burma. Although the campaign was a success for the NCAC, conventional forces received significant assistance from DET 101. In order to provide the reader with some background information on DET 101, this section concludes with a brief summary of DET 101's operations from late 1942 through the end of the NCAC's campaign for Myitkyina.

This monograph then analyzes the physical environment of north Burma. Traditionally, during the intelligence preparation of the battlefield or IPB, the physical environment is described as the terrain and climate of a particular geographic area or location.<sup>18</sup> Even though the IPB provides a starting point for analyzing the physical environment, it does not address all the conditions that affect operations. For the purposes of this study, the physical environment encompassed the geography, terrain, weather conditions, and environmental hazards like illness and disease that affected military operations in north Burma. In examining the physical environment, this study looked for conditions that traditionally inhibited conventional military operations and analyzed how DET 101 exploited those conditions. Conditions in the physical environment that restricted or limited conventional freedom of maneuver; restrictive and highly restrictive terrain, lines of communication, or extreme weather and climate, were circumstances that ultimately favored DET 101's UW operations.

In the next chapter, this paper studied the enemy's impact on DET 101's UW operations. The enemy has perhaps one of the most significant impacts on the operational environment. To

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<sup>17</sup> JP 1 defines unity of effort as coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization, which is the product of successful unified action. Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), GL-13.

<sup>18</sup> Army Training Publication (ATP) 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield/Battlespace* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 3-6.

better understand this important component of the operational environment, the US Army's mission variables provide guidance for how to analyze the enemy. According to the ADRP 5-0, the 'enemy' mission variable specifically addresses the dispositions, doctrine, equipment, capabilities, vulnerabilities, and courses of action the enemy may execute.<sup>19</sup> This study, using the 'enemy' mission variable as a starting point, analyzed the Japanese Burma Area Army and its subordinate elements to identify potential challenges and opportunities that DET 101 exploited during its successful UW operations in north Burma. The Burma Area Army's focus on conventional threats from India and China ultimately pulled resources from north Burma and created opportunities for DET 101 to expand its operations.

The human domain, as defined by SOCOM 2020, is "the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior in a population-centric conflict."<sup>20</sup> Although the human domain provided a line of departure for analysis and study, it proved far too broad for the limitations of this paper. In order to get a more-focused approach to understanding the human conditions in the operational environment that may be favorable to UW operations, this chapter examined the nature and sympathies of the people. For this chapter, the nature of the people refers to the cultural features, such as language, lifestyle, or experience, within a demographic or group that could be exploited or nurtured to support UW operations. The sympathies of the people are the preferences or inclinations of a demographic to support one side or another during conflict. In this case, whether or not a population was more-inclined to support the Allied or the Japanese cause.

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<sup>19</sup> Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-9.

<sup>20</sup> Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) 2020, *SOCOM 2020* (MacDill AFB, FL: United States Special Operations Command, 2010), 1.



The final chapter of this study examined how DET 101 worked with conventional forces to achieve unity of action in north Burma. Conventional forces and conventional operations are often complemented or, in some cases, even supplemented by UW operations. Because UW operations are conducted in denied areas to support a resistance or insurgency, SOF elements, executing UW operations, often have access and placement to resources and intelligence that conventional forces need. Conversely, conventional forces often possess capabilities and resources that can enhance UW operations. Therefore, UW operations often rely on the synchronized efforts of SOF and conventional forces and unified action with multinational partners to achieve success.<sup>21</sup> According to the JP 3-05, unified action includes the synchronized, coordinated, and integrated activities of government and nongovernment entities with the military toward a common objective.<sup>22</sup> However, because there were no government or nongovernment entities in north Burma during World War II, within the context of this paper, unified action applied only to the conventional US and Allied forces with which DET 101 partnered. In many cases, conditions that were detrimental to conventional forces or operations were overcome or mitigated by DET 101's UW elements.

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<sup>21</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations*, II-8.

<sup>22</sup> JP 3-05 defines Unified Action as the synchronized, coordinated, and integrated activities of government and nongovernment entities with those of the military to achieve common objectives. Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations*, II-8.

### **Strategic Context and the NCAC Campaign for North Burma**

US and Allied operations in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater of operations were constrained by strategic decisions made before the United States entered World War II. With its prewar commitment to a “Europe First” strategy, the United States agreed to support Great Britain and direct the majority of its war effort towards Germany rather than Japan.<sup>23</sup> US and Allied priorities after the defeat of Germany were the security of Australia, New Zealand, and India; supporting the Chinese war effort; and securing points of “vantage” to wage an offensive war against Japan.<sup>24</sup> Even though Great Britain and the United States agreed that Burma provided a line of communication or LOC to deliver equipment and supplies to maintain the Chinese war effort against Japan, the countries approached Burma differently.<sup>25</sup> For the United States, offensive operations in Burma were limited to re-opening the LOC from Calcutta, India to China. The British, on the other hand, believed that capturing Rangoon and liberating Burma would provide the best means to re-establish a land link to China.<sup>26</sup>

Differences aside, following the Quebec Quadrant Conference in August 1943, the Allies agreed to launch an offensive into Burma in early 1944. The planned offensive was meant to include US, British, and Chinese advances into portions of north, eastern, and central Burma. The major US contribution to the offensive was LTG Stilwell’s Chinese-American force, which would attack from the Shingbuiyang area in China toward Myitkyina, Burma. Myitkyina, in addition to being the most-populous city in north Burma, possessed an airfield that enabled the

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<sup>23</sup> Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (1990; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 42.

<sup>24</sup> Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941-1942* (1953 repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999), 120.

<sup>25</sup> Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1943-1944* (1959; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 34.

<sup>26</sup> William Joseph Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (1956; repr., London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1987), 249.

Japanese to threaten the US aerial LOC to China.<sup>27</sup> However, before the Allied plan was fully initiated, the Japanese launched offensives into the Akyan and Imphal.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the proposed British and Chinese advances were postponed until April 1944.<sup>29</sup> Despite British and Chinese delays, LTG Stilwell's Chinese-American force began its initial advance in December 1943 with the US-trained and equipped Chinese 38th Division seizing river-crossing sites at Yupbang Ga.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> David W. Hogan, *India-Burma: The Campaigns of World War II*, Center of Military History (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), 11.

<sup>28</sup> Elements of the Japanese 15th and 28th Armies launched operations HA-GO and U-GO, respectively. U-GO, the Burma Area Army's main effort targeted Allied units in Imphal, India. HA-GO was a diversionary attack with elements of the 28th Army into Akyab, India. Office of the Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 132: Burma Operations Record, 28th Army Operations in Akyab Area (Revised Edition)," Headquarters, United States Army Forces Far East and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), Office of the Chief of Military History, April 1958, 3. [Electronic Record]; Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Special Collections and Archives, Digital Library, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>29</sup> Matloff, *Strategic Planning: 1943-1944*, 440.

<sup>30</sup> Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems, United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater* (1956; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 124.

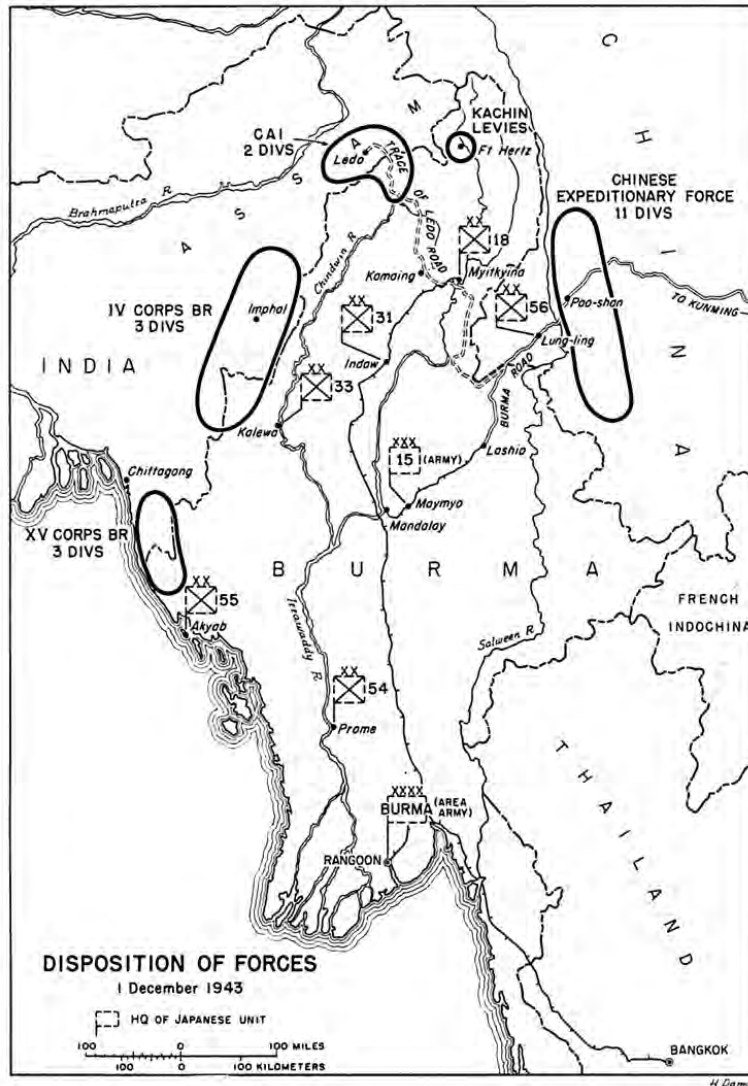


Figure 1. Disposition of Forces in Burma, December 1943.

Source: Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems, United States Army in World War II: China-Burma-India Theater* (1956; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 120.

The NCAC campaign in north Burma was meant to enable the Allies to complete a new LOC to China and to increase the safety of the aerial LOC from India to China.<sup>31</sup> By securing Myitkyina and its nearby airfield, Air Transport Command or ATC could fly a less hazardous route through the Himalayas to China and US engineering units could complete the Ledo Road

<sup>31</sup> Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, 251.

and its companion oil pipeline, ending the Japanese blockade of China.<sup>32</sup> The principle units that LTG Stilwell had for his campaign were the 22nd and 38th Chinese Divisions, the 5307th Unit (Provisional), and the 3rd Indian Division (better known as the Special Force or the Chindits).<sup>33</sup> The 5307th and the Special Force were long range penetration groups that were specially trained in jungle warfare and were meant to operate behind Japanese lines to enable the 22nd and 38th Divisions to advance southward through the Hukawng Valley and to seize Myitkyina.<sup>34</sup> Opposing the NCAC's operations in north Burma was the veteran Japanese 18th Division, which maintained a maneuver element in the Hukawng Valley and secured Myitkyina and its nearby airfield.<sup>35</sup> Between February and April, the 5307th, supported by the more heavily armed 22nd and 38th Divisions, fought a series of battles against elements of the 18th Division until finally seizing Myitkyina's airfield on 17 May.<sup>36</sup> However, after a failed Chinese assault on Japanese positions in the town of Myitkyina, the weakened 5307th and a collection of supporting units could not secure the town until 3 August 1944.<sup>37</sup> Notwithstanding the three-month delay, with Myitkyina firmly secured by the Allies, the NCAC's north Burma campaign was an overall success.

Despite the overall success of the NCAC's campaign in north Burma, conventional Allied and US forces received significant assistance from an unconventional warfare element from the Office of Strategic Services or OSS known as DET 101. DET 101's role in the campaign

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<sup>32</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, 251.

<sup>34</sup> Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders: February-May 1944* (1945; repr., Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1990), 8.

<sup>35</sup> Hiroshi Fuwa, "Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley," *Military Review*, Volume XLII, no. 1 (January 1962): 51.

<sup>36</sup> Hogan, *India-Burma*, 17.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

evolved from gathering intelligence and providing screens for Allied advances to leading native forces in guerrilla warfare against the Japanese.<sup>38</sup> As the campaign progressed, DET 101's guerrillas were a combat multiplier for conventional forces that were losing manpower to exhaustion, disease, and enemy action. Without any replacement system for the 5307th, DET 101's guerrillas augmented weakened Marauder battalions as they advanced toward Myitkyina.<sup>39</sup> In addition to supporting the Marauders, DET 101's guerrillas ambushed isolated Japanese garrisons, enemy patrols, supply convoys and depots, and destroyed bridges and railroads to prevent the Japanese from repositioning or reinforcing their forces at Myitkyina.<sup>40</sup> COL Hunter, the deputy commander for the 5307th summed up DET 101's effects on operations in Myitkyina when he cabled DET 101's commander, COL Ray Peers with, "Thanks to your people for a swell job. Could not have succeeded without them."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *War Report: Office of Strategic Services: Operations in the Field, Volume 2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), 385. (18499845) [Electronic Record]; Sources and Methods Files, 1941-2002; Records of the Office of Strategic Services, 1919-2002, Record Group 226; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>39</sup> By the time the 5307th began its advance toward Myitkyina, the had 1,400 of its original 2,997 soldiers and needed to be combined with Chinese Units and DET 101's Kachin guerrilla fighters. 300 Kachin guerrillas helped to round out the 2nd Marauder Battalion for the movement and initial siege of Myitkyina. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 223.

<sup>40</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: Detachment 101 in the Myitkyina Campaign, Part II," *Veritas* 4, no. 3 (2008): 42.

<sup>41</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 386.

## Overview of Detachment 101's Operations

Detachment 101 was activated on 14 April 1942 as a component of the OSS's predecessor, the Coordinator of Information or COI.<sup>42</sup> DET 101 originally consisted of twenty US Army soldiers but expanded to include over 10,000 indigenous forces and Allied personnel.<sup>43</sup> DET 101's first operational directive from LTG Stilwell, the commander of US Forces in the CBI Theater, directed the detachment to conduct sabotage against Japanese LOC that supported enemy operations at the Myitkyina airfield.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, DET 101's early field operations consisted of short and long-range penetrations into Japanese territory in northern Burma.<sup>45</sup> Short-range penetrations, usually conducted on foot, were meant to gather intelligence and conduct minor acts of sabotage.<sup>46</sup> Long-range penetrations, on the other hand, were executed by agents parachuted hundreds of miles behind Japanese lines with the task of conducting strategic sabotage; in this case, sabotaging key bridges on Japanese LOCs to Myitkyina airfield.<sup>47</sup> Both types of penetrations helped to expand the detachment's operational experience; however, short-range penetrations ultimately proved to be more feasible and likely to succeed.

In addition to executing short and long-range penetrations, DET 101 also established field bases in northern Burma where indigenous forces were recruited and trained to gather intelligence, conduct sabotage, and harass Japanese forces.<sup>48</sup> From these base camps, located fifty

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<sup>42</sup> William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Force* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1963), 27.

<sup>43</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma: Jungle War Against the Japanese* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>44</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 370.

<sup>45</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 373.

to one hundred fifty miles behind enemy lines, Kachin natives and their DET 101 cadres established guerrilla forces that included hundreds of personnel.<sup>49</sup> By January 1944, DET 101 had established four operational areas in Northern Burma with over nine hundred Kachin guerrillas; between January and March 1944 that number expanded to over three thousand.<sup>50</sup> DET 101's guerrillas, referred to as Kachin Rangers, provided actionable targets for Tenth Army Air Force operations, rescued downed Allied airmen behind Japanese lines, screened the 5307th's advance to Myitkyina, and served as another maneuver force to seize the Myitkyina airfield.<sup>51</sup> By the end of the NCAC campaign, DET 101 had expanded its guerrilla force to almost 10,000 personnel and was contributing battalion-sized elements to support Allied operations.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> David W. Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, Center of Military History (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, Center of Military History, 1992), 106.

<sup>50</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>52</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 388.



## **The Physical Environment: Challenges and Opportunities**

The physical environment affects all manner of conventional and unconventional operations. Terrain considerations, changes in climate or weather, and environmental health concerns create opportunities, limitations, and risks that often dictate how, when, and where militaries pursue their objectives. In pursuing an UW campaign, conditions that often have a negative impact on conventional operations can often be exploited to support UW operations. A country or territory's size often creates a dilemma for an occupying power; the occupier must decide between devoting resources and combat power to control and secure terrain or to maintain offensive capabilities. A large geographic space, isolated from outside influences by natural or manmade borders and extreme weather and climactic conditions, can create a false sense of security for an occupying force or established government. Highly restrictive or impassible terrain for conventional or motorized military formations is often assumed to limit the scope and threat of an adversary's conventional or unconventional military activity. The physical environment of Burma during World War II, presented many challenges to conventional and unconventional operations but also illustrates a number of favorable conditions that can be exploited by an UW element or campaign.

In its entirety, Burma was approximately twice the size of Germany and had over 250,000 square miles of forest and jungles.<sup>53</sup> The majority of Burma was sparsely populated, with approximately seventy-five to eighty-five percent of the country classified as primitive forestland.<sup>54</sup> Restrictive terrain like mountains, narrow river valleys, and dense tropical vegetation limited military and civilian traffic to the country's small number of existing roads and railways.<sup>55</sup> Along the Indo-China frontier, the Chin, Naga, and Lushai Mountains created a

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<sup>53</sup> Roy McKelvie, *The War in Burma* (London: Nethuen and Company, Ltd., 1948), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Peers and Brellis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 46.

<sup>55</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 97.

natural border between Burma and India.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, parallel mountain ridges that extended from the Salween and Mekong Rivers defined Burma's north and southeastern borders with Tibet, China, Indo-China, and Siam.<sup>57</sup> Burma's four main north-south flowing rivers, the Chindwin, which marked the border with India; the Sittang, located along the frontier with Siam; the Salween, which bordered China; and the Irrawaddy, which connected north Burma to the sea; also helped to define much of the country's borders and limited interactions with the outside world.<sup>58</sup>

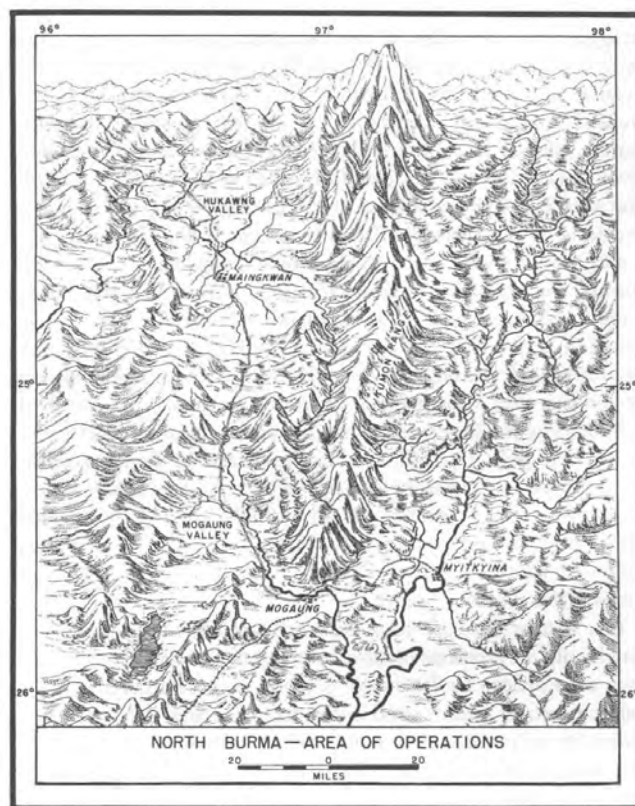


Figure 2. North Burma Area of Operations.

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<sup>56</sup> McKelvie, *The War in Burma*, 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>58</sup> Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Triumph 1942-45* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 8.

Source: Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders: February-May 1944* (1945; repr., Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1990), 19.

In 1944, the US Army defined the North Burma operational zone as the area south of the Burma-India border through the Hukawng Valley to the Mogaung-Myitkyina area.<sup>59</sup> North Burma, the focus of DET 101's operations, included the foothills of the Himalayas and large areas covered with thick secondary-growth jungles.<sup>60</sup> The mountainous terrain that separated north Burma from China and India included ridges and peaks that exceeded 10,000 feet as well as extensive lowlands in the Hukawng Valley.<sup>61</sup> According to the US Army's Military Observer Group in India and the Joint Intelligence Collection Agency, much of the Hukawng Valley was covered with "heavy forest and true jungle" while the terrain between the Hukawng and the Mogaung-Myitkyina area was "hills also covered with heavy tropical forests."<sup>62</sup> The terrain in DET 101's area of operations was so bad that one DET 101 estimate concluded "it often took thirty days to walk the same distance that a light plane could fly over in an hour."<sup>63</sup> In many cases, the distances that Allied and Japanese forces covered, primarily on foot, were immense. As an example, the Marauder's area of operations, which included the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys covered almost 5,000 square miles and was roughly the size of Connecticut.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> United States Military Observer Group in India and Joint Intelligence Collection Agency, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese Army in the Burma Campaign from November 1943 to September 1944," United States Military Observer Group in India and Joint Intelligence Collection Agency, CBI/SEA, October 1944, 10. [Electronic Record]; Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Special Collections and Archives, Digital Library, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>60</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: Detachment 101 in the Myitkyina Campaign, Part I," *Veritas* 4, no. 1 (2008): 31.

<sup>61</sup> Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> US Military Observer Group, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese," 11.

<sup>63</sup> Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: Part I," 31.

<sup>64</sup> Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 19.

North Burma's thick jungles severely restricted movement but also limited visibility from both the ground and air. Jungle vegetation degraded efforts to locate enemy formations and targets but also created opportunities to infiltrate friendly forces well-behind enemy occupied territory.<sup>65</sup> British and American long-range penetration groups used the jungles to maneuver regimental-sized formations into enemy territory and harass Japanese forces and supplies.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, the Japanese also used north Burma's jungles to camouflage their movements. Prior to the Japanese 15th Army's attack against British forces in Imphal, a US military intelligence report observed, "no troop movements were seen by day until a few days prior to the offensive being launched...very little new road and trail construction and very few new tracks were visible from the air in forward areas."<sup>67</sup> In addition to concealing military movements, jungle canopies also hid key terrain such as airfields, bridges, and supply depots. From the air, the "mass of trees and green foliage" of north Burma prevented USAAF pilots from identifying or assessing damage to potential jungle targets.<sup>68</sup>

North Burma's restrictive terrain and dense jungles presented significant opportunities for DET 101. Throughout 1943, DET 101 infiltrated trained intelligence agents into carefully selected locations in north Burma to reconnoiter terrain and to make "cautious contact with reliable natives" to set the conditions for the establishment of field bases.<sup>69</sup> From these field bases, OSS personnel recruited and trained Kachins to protect outposts, perform minor acts of

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<sup>65</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 371.

<sup>66</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, "Allied Long Range Penetration Groups for Burma: The Chindits, the Marauders, and the MARS Task Force," *Veritas* 4, no. 1 (2008): 26.

<sup>67</sup> US Military Observer Group, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese," 27-28.

<sup>68</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 57.

<sup>69</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 372.

sabotage, and execute small ambushes against the Japanese.<sup>70</sup> As DET 101's operations expanded its field bases became more elaborate. For example, in the Hukawng Valley, DET 101's team KNOTHEAD constructed a makeshift airstrip, which, when not in use, was camouflaged with movable huts.<sup>71</sup> Jungle vegetation also aided DET 101 agents. As DET 101 expanded its footprint in north Burma, the area's jungle terrain masked agents and observers. Throughout the summer and fall of 1943, DET 101 established observation points north and west of the Japanese airfield at Myitkyina. From their concealed positions, these agents provided a stream of intelligence and targets to DET 101 and the Tenth Air Force.<sup>72</sup>

The tropical climate of north Burma created additional obstacles to military operations. Extreme differences in temperature and precipitation between dry and monsoon seasons challenged military operations. During the relatively dry months from December until March, the average monthly rainfall was less than one-tenth of an inch; the biggest challenge to military operations was dusty conditions on roads and trails.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, the monsoon season, which lasted from May until September, brought up to two hundred inches of rainfall to some areas and severely hindered movement on lines of communication.<sup>74</sup> In lowland areas like the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys, flooding greatly restricted movement.<sup>75</sup> In 1944, the US Army observed that during the monsoon season, "patrols operate only with extreme difficulty, and the

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<sup>70</sup> William R. Peers, "Intelligence Operations of OSS Detachment 101," 1960, A2. (7282620) [Electronic Record]; Articles from "Studies in Intelligence", 1955-1992; Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, 1894-2002, Record Group 263; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>71</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 108.

<sup>72</sup> Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model, Part I," 33.

<sup>73</sup> US Military Observer Group, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese," 9.

<sup>74</sup> McKelvie, *The War in Burma*, 5.

<sup>75</sup> Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 21.

simple necessity of keeping alive in this completely wet environment is an arduous task.”<sup>76</sup>

Although the weather during the dry season was fairly temperate, the monsoon season’s high humidity, regular temperatures in excess of 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and constant moisture rotted, decayed, and rusted most military equipment.<sup>77</sup> In addition to destroying military equipment, the wet weather also had negative impacts on the majority of north Burma’s existing roads and trails. Soil and dry weather roads became “like axle grease and, for all practical purposes bottomless.”<sup>78</sup> Maintaining existing roadways consumed logistics and sustainment resources that would otherwise have supported soldiers in the field.<sup>79</sup>

The lines of communication in north Burma also limited the scope of Allied and Japanese operations. North Burma was mostly undeveloped and contained little more than native footpaths and cart tracks. The road from Kamaing through the Mogaung corridor and into the Hukawng Valley supported vehicle traffic during the dry months but was impassible during the monsoon season. The area’s one railhead, located at Myitkyina, was a single-track rail line; however it did connect the area with central and southern Burma.<sup>80</sup> Burma’s main line of communication, the Burma Road, was 750 miles long and extended from Kunming, China to Lashio, Burma.<sup>81</sup> The Allies, having lost control of the southern portion of the Burma Road, attempted to create another line of communication, the Ledo Road, which ran from upper Assam, India across north Burma to

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<sup>76</sup> US Military Observer Group, “Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese,” 10.

<sup>77</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, “The Organizational Evolution of OSS Detachment 101 in Burma, 1942-1945” (PhD diss., Texas A&M University, 2008), 30, accessed December 27, 2015, <http://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/ETD-TAMU-3280/SACQUETY-DISSERTATION.pdf?sequence=1>.

<sup>78</sup> US Military Observer Group, “Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese,” 10.

<sup>79</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell’s Command Problems*, 97.

<sup>80</sup> Center of Military History, *Merrill’s Marauders*, 20.

<sup>81</sup> Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1984), 8.

Lashio where it connected with the existing Burma Road south of Myitkyina.<sup>82</sup> Without access to either the Burma or Ledo Roads, the only other option to transport men and equipment was by river. Portions of the Irrawaddy River and its tributary, the Chindwin River, which ran north to south, were navigable by boat.<sup>83</sup> Throughout much of the north Burma campaign, the Japanese had access to road and river networks from Mogaung and Kamaing to transport supplies.<sup>84</sup> In the Hukawng Valley, Allied and Japanese forces exploited the Tarung, Tanai, and Nambyu Rivers to establish defensive positions and to move men and equipment.<sup>85</sup>

Even though weather extremes and limited lines of communication challenged operations in north Burma, they also presented opportunities for DET 101. Because many of north Burma's roads and trails flooded or became impassible during the monsoon season, the Japanese were left with few options to maneuver or resupply their forces. As a result, Japanese movements during the siege of Myitkyina, with limited trails, roads, and rails to use, were often observed and targeted by DET 101's guerrilla forces. Throughout the siege, well-placed DET 101 guerrillas, located along the roads and trails south and east of Myitkyina, ambushed and killed over five hundred reinforcing Japanese soldiers.<sup>86</sup> Along the Irrawaddy, the primary Japanese LOC from Myitkyina, two hundred Kachin Rangers established observation posts and blocking positions, preventing Japanese forces from retreating and resupplying the garrison from the south.<sup>87</sup> From their positions overlooking the Irrawaddy, the Kachin Rangers killed or captured over three

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<sup>82</sup> Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model, Part I," 31-32.

<sup>83</sup> Allen, *Burma: The Longest War*, 8.

<sup>84</sup> US Military Observer Group, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese," 11.

<sup>85</sup> Fuwa, "Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley," 50-53.

<sup>86</sup> Peers and Breilis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 167.

<sup>87</sup> Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: Part II," 50.

hundred fifty enemy soldiers.<sup>88</sup> Further south from Myitkyina, DET 101 patrols prevented the Japanese from moving resources along the Mogaung-Myitkyina rail line.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, with their lines of communication under constant pressure from DET 101, the Japanese were unable to reinforce or evacuate significant forces from Myitkyina.

North Burma's jungle environment was also home to exotic diseases. Malaria and dysentery, as well as contaminated water sources, were known health threats to anyone in Burma's northern hill country; an estimated two hundred thousand died annually from fevers and dysentery.<sup>90</sup> In 1943, The British Fourteenth Army estimated that for every man evacuated with wounds another one hundred and twenty four were evacuated for illnesses. Likewise, 5307th suffered over one thousand disease-related casualties during its campaign to seize Myitkyina.<sup>91</sup> The Japanese also suffered significant casualties from malaria and dysentery. Without adequate supplies of anti-malarial drugs, malaria incidence among Japanese soldiers was significant. During May 1944, captured Japanese documents and prisoners of war reported that malaria affected anywhere from 20-50% of Japanese forces.<sup>92</sup> Former Imperial Japanese Army COL Hiroshi Fuwa wrote that during operations in the Hukawng Valley (within the 18th Division), "all were suffering from malaria and beriberi, and most were affected with various skin diseases."<sup>93</sup>

Although malaria and dysentery caused many Allied, Japanese, and civilian casualties, typhus fever also afflicted many soldiers in north Burma. Typhus, originally classified as "fever

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<sup>88</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 168.

<sup>89</sup> Sacquety, "Evolution of OSS Detachment 101," 182.

<sup>90</sup> Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China, United States Army in World II: China-Burma-India Theater* (1953; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 308.

<sup>91</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> US Military Observer Group, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese," 94-95.

<sup>93</sup> Fuwa, "Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley," 57.



of unknown origin,” began infecting Allied forces during the late summer and fall of 1943 and became a significant challenge for Merrill’s Marauders, the Chindits, and DET 101.<sup>94</sup> Fever of unknown origin affected so many Marauders that the NCAC originally accused Marauder medical officers of practicing excessive evacuation. Over two hundred marauders were eventually diagnosed with typhus and thirty later died.<sup>95</sup> Japanese forces, particularly in north Burma, were also afflicted with typhus. Soldiers in the Japanese garrison at Myitkyina began reporting cases of “eruptive fever” in October of 1943.<sup>96</sup> The Japanese, much like the Allies, were unable to determine the initial cause of what they later referred to as “Burma Eruptive Fever.” However, captured Japanese medical documents observed, “Burma Eruptive Fever occurs mostly along river banks in dry grass areas which in monsoon season were covered with mud.”<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately for Allied and Japanese soldiers in north Burma, a large portion of the terrain in low-lying areas like the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys were covered with dry grass areas that flooded and were covered with mud during the rainy portion of the year.

Even though tropical illnesses negatively impacted Allied and Japanese soldiers, they also presented opportunities for DET 101. The Kachins suffered from many of the same maladies as Allied and Japanese soldiers: typhus, malaria, and dysentery. To address DET 101 and Kachin health issues, a US Navy surgeon, several pharmacist mates, and medical supplies were delivered to Fort Hertz in late October 1943.<sup>98</sup> The medical personnel and supplies were eventually moved to an advance base in Ngumla where DET 101 established a hospital, surgical clinic, and

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<sup>94</sup> US Military Observer Group, “Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese,” 98.

<sup>95</sup> Charles N. Hunter, Report of Overseas Observations, February 1945, 8. [Electronic Record]; Maneuver Center of Excellence Libraries, HQ Donovan Research Library, Army Research Library, Fort Benning, GA.

<sup>96</sup> US Military Observer Group, “Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese,” 99.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 382.

dispensary.<sup>99</sup> During a two-month period, LCDR Jim Luce, the detachment's US Navy surgeon, treated over 720 patients, military and civilian, from his treatment facility in Ngumla. Luce treated "537 individuals for wounds and diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, dysentery, tapeworm, chancre, and gonorrhea."<sup>100</sup> According to the War Report of the OSS, "Successful medical treatment served to acquire staunch friends for the detachment, with a minimum of effort and time expended."<sup>101</sup>

North Burma's physical environment presented many challenges for conventional and unconventional operations. However, many of the conditions that challenged conventional operations created opportunities for DET 101. Rough, impassible, or highly restrictive terrain hindered enemy movement and prevented the Japanese from patrolling and securing much of north Burma's jungles. North Burma's limited lines of communication canalized Japanese maneuver and presented another opportunity for DET 101 to exploit the physical environment. With few lines of communication to patrol or interdict, DET 101's guerrillas executed highly successful ambushes to block and isolate Japanese elements at Myitkyina. Lastly, although illness and disease degraded Allied, Japanese, and DET 101 combat power; it presented a significant opportunity for DET 101 to improve its relationships with the Kachin people.

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<sup>99</sup>*War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 383.

<sup>100</sup> Richard Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines with the OSS in Burma* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, 1979), 368.

<sup>101</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 383.

### **The Enemy: A Threat Focused Elsewhere**

Whether conducting conventional or unconventional operations, the enemy's contribution to the operational environment often outweighs many other considerations. The enemy's resources, capabilities, recent operations, and potential courses of action often dictate how friendly forces allocate resources and plan operations. In Burma, the Japanese Burma Area Army focused much of its efforts on conventional threats emanating from India and China. Conventional British and US-equipped Chinese forces posed direct threats to Japanese forces in Burma. As a result, the majority of Japanese army resources throughout Burma were focused on countering potential invasions from India and China, rather than conducting counterinsurgency or counter guerrilla operations in Burma. The Japanese focus outside of Burma created many opportunities for DET 101 to exploit enemy manpower and resource shortfalls in Burma.

The Japanese invaded Burma in the summer of 1942 with 60,000 men and eventually committed almost 275,000 soldiers to controlling the country.<sup>102</sup> The Japanese Burma Area Army was the senior Japanese Army Headquarters responsible for all army operations in Burma. The Burma Area Army consisted primarily of two, and later three, subordinate Armies, the 15th, 28th, and 33rd Armies.<sup>103</sup> The 15th Army, Japan's initial headquarters in Burma was originally tasked with defeating the British and strengthening Japan's blockade of China.<sup>104</sup> In order to complete its blockade of China, the 15<sup>th</sup> Army focused its initial operations on severing the Allies' main line of communication to China, the Burma Road.<sup>105</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup> Army, consisting of the 15th, 18th, 31st,

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<sup>102</sup> McKelvie, *The War in Burma*, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Office of the Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 45: Imperial General Headquarters Army High Command Record, Mid 1941-August 1945," Headquarters, Far East Command, Military History Section, Japanese Research Division, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1953, 107. [Electronic Record]; Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Special Collections and Archives, Digital Library, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

33rd, and 56th Divisions originally controlled Japanese Army operations in North and Central Burma.<sup>106</sup> However, in April 1944, the 33rd Army, consisting of the 18th, 56th, and 53rd Divisions, was established in Northern Burma. The 33rd Army's primary tasks were to oppose US and Chinese operations in the Hukawng Valley; Chinese advances from the Yunnan Province in China; and British operations in the Mawlu-Myitkyina area.

In order to secure its gains in Burma and further isolate China, Japanese operations until the spring of 1944 focused on an offensive to seize terrain in Northeastern India. Between September 1942 and August 1943, GEN Mutaguchi, the Japanese 15th Army commander, developed and lobbied for plans to launch an Imphal offensive.<sup>107</sup> GEN Mutaguchi believed that an offensive operation against British forces in Assam, India, would "deal a severe blow to the British by destroying their counteroffensive bases in India and would ultimately result in fomenting the struggle for Indian independence."<sup>108</sup> Additionally, GEN Mutaguchi and his staff understood that the 15th Army's 700-mile front from the Zibya Range to the Chindwin River needed to be expanded. Because the Chindwin River was passable during the dry season, the 15th Army needed to expand its line of defense further west to the Arakan Range in India to prevent Allied forces from infiltrating Japanese territory.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, in August of 1943, believing that the Allies were planning a counter-offensive to recapture Burma and open the Burma Road, the

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<sup>106</sup> Office of the Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 134: Burma Operations Record, 15th Army Operations in Imphal Area and Withdrawal to Northern Burma (Revised Edition)," Headquarters, United States Army, Japan, Office of the Chief of Military History, October 1957, 17. [Electronic Record]; Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Special Collections and Archives, Digital Library, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 17.

Burma Area Army ordered the 15th Army to advance to Imphal, India and establish a defensive line in the vicinity of the Arakan Mountain Range.<sup>110</sup>

Based on the Burma Area Army's guidance and the belief that an Allied counteroffensive was imminent, the 15th Army expected that the Imphal Operation would begin sometime between late 1943 and early 1944.<sup>111</sup> However, the Japanese Imperial Army did not approve the Burma Area Army's Imphal Offensive, named U-Go, until 7 January 1944.<sup>112</sup> In fact, despite the January approval date, U-Go did not officially commence until 8 March 1944.<sup>113</sup> The 15th Army, unfortunately, did not wait until March or the earlier January approval date to begin executing preparatory operations. In October 1943, the 15th Army began operations along the Salween River to destroy counteroffensive bases of the Chungking Army and to seize river-crossing points.<sup>114</sup> The New 1st Army of the Chungking Army, equipped and trained by the US Army, was greatly superior to other Chinese armies and posed a significant threat to Japanese forces in north Burma.<sup>115</sup> To isolate the New 1st Army, elements of the Japanese 56th and 18th Divisions initiated operations to blockade Salween River crossings and cripple the strongest Chinese division in the area, the 36th Division. By the end of October, the 36th Division was dispersed and all possible river crossing points were blockaded. The 56th Division was left to defend the

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<sup>110</sup> Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 134," 38.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>112</sup> Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 45," 108.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>114</sup> Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 134," 39.

<sup>115</sup> Office of the Chief Military History, "Japanese Monograph 132: Burma Operations Record, 28th Army Operations in Akyab Area (Revised Edition)," Headquarters, United States Army Forces Far East and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), Office of the Chief of Military History, April 1958, 2. [Electronic Record]; Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Special Collections and Archives, Digital Library, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

newly captured terrain and to mop-up remaining forces while the 18th Division was ordered to Myitkyina.<sup>116</sup>

Even though the Japanese had significant combat power in north Burma throughout much of 1943, they did not control the terrain. Operation Loincloth, Brigadier Orde Wingate's first Chindit invasion of north Burma in February 1943, which destroyed sections of the Myitkyina Railway and harassed Japanese forces east of the Zibyu Mountain Range, illustrated weaknesses in Japanese defenses and proved the Japanese did not control the jungle.<sup>117</sup> In fact, the 15th Army conceded after the war that prior to Operation Loincloth, its forces along the Chindwin and Zibyu Mountain Range did not patrol the jungle.<sup>118</sup> Although the Japanese eventually adjusted their posture in north Burma, their focus remained on conventional threats from China and India. With the 56th Division decisively engaged securing the 15th Army's border against the Yunnan Chinese, the 18<sup>th</sup> Division securing the entirety of the Hukawng Valley, and the remainder of the 15th Army focused on U-Go, the Japanese did not have the resources to effectively hold key terrain and secure north Burma's population. As more resources were diverted towards Burma's borders, DET 101 found gaps in Japanese lines and successfully expanded its UW operations in north Burma. Beginning in the spring of 1943, DET 101 infiltrated advanced teams behind Japanese lines, established operating bases, recruited guerrillas and began harassing Japanese installations and outposts.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, between 1943 and 1944, DET 101 learned its craft and established its positions in north Burma—and the Japanese continued to focus on U-Go.

The Japanese focus outside Burma gave DET 101 the freedom of maneuver to practice and evolve its UW operations. DET 101's early field operations consisted of short and long-range

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<sup>116</sup> Chief of Military History, "Japanese Monograph 134," 55.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 106.

penetrations into Japanese territory in Northern Burma.<sup>120</sup> Short-range penetrations, usually conducted on foot, were meant to gather intelligence and conduct minor acts of sabotage.<sup>121</sup> For long-range penetrations, native and US agents parachuted hundreds of miles behind Japanese lines to conduct “strategic sabotage”—sabotaging key bridges on Japanese LOCs to Myitkyina airfield.<sup>122</sup> Although short-range penetrations proved more successful, both types of operations confirmed that Japanese lines could be infiltrated but were also high risk for DET 101’s personnel. Because none of DET 101’s US officers or soldiers had ever participated in guerrilla operations and were unfamiliar with Burma, the majority of DET 101’s early operations were based upon trial and error.<sup>123</sup> Had the Japanese focused additional resources towards a potential UW threat, DET 101’s early mistakes might have proven catastrophic. Without the freedom of maneuver to test tactics and techniques behind Japanese lines in north Burma, DET 101 would not have learned valuable lessons about how to infiltrate, supply, and train their guerrilla forces and ultimately how to survive in the jungle.<sup>124</sup>

Between December 1943 and July 1944, as the rest of the 15th Army prepared for and executed U-Go, the 18th Division struggled to maintain its positions throughout the Hukawng Valley and around Myitkyina. Commanded by Lieutenant General Shinichi Tanaka, the 18th Division was tasked with “annihilating the enemy invading northern Burma, or, at the very least, to hold Myitkyina and Kamaing at all costs.”<sup>125</sup> The requirement to hold Myitkyina and Kamaing

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<sup>120</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 31.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>123</sup> William R. Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma,” *Military Review*, Volume XXVIII, no. 3 (June 1948): 14.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>125</sup> Fuwa, “Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley,” 51.

meant that LTG Tanaka would need to maintain defensive forces in both locations—limiting his combat power throughout the Hukawng Valley.<sup>126</sup> To accomplish both its tasks, the 18th Division had two infantry regiments, three mountain-artillery battalions, and one heavy artillery battalion; approximately 4,000 combat troops with about 150 rounds of ammunition for each rifle and artillery piece.<sup>127</sup>

Because of Operation U-Go, the Japanese had limited resources to support the 18th Division in north Burma. In fact, the 18th Division expected no reinforcements or additional support until the Imphal offensive was successfully completed.<sup>128</sup> Between December 1943 and March 1944 the 18th Division fought a series of battles to delay the US and Chinese advance through the Hukawng Valley. Although the US and Chinese forces suffered numerous casualties, the 18th Division, without the hope of additional reinforcements was unable to stop the Allied advance. As Hiroshi Fuwa, a former colonel in the Imperial Japanese Army observed, from December 1943 until July 1944, “The Japanese-US-Chinese strength ratio (in the Hukawng Valley) was approximately three to one in favor of the Allied forces.”<sup>129</sup> By the end of March, at the start of Operation U-Go, most of the 18th Division’s infantry companies had been reduced to between fifty and sixty soldiers.<sup>130</sup> (The standard Japanese infantry company was assigned 181

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<sup>126</sup> Fuwa, “Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley,” 51.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>130</sup> Chief of Military History, “Japanese Monograph 134,” 66.



soldiers.)<sup>131</sup> By the end of March 1944, many 18th Division soldiers were ill, lacked adequate uniforms and equipment and were living off of a “handful of rice” per day.<sup>132</sup>

With the preponderance of the 15th Army executing U-Go, the Japanese did not possess the resources to defend against a potential invasion from China and deter DET 101’s UW operations. Even if the Japanese possessed a doctrinal 1:3 force ratio, as claimed by COL Fuwa, to defend north Burma from the invading NCAC forces, they could not both defend terrain and patrol for potential insurgent or guerrilla activity.<sup>133</sup> Although the 15th Army left two divisions in north Burma, the requirement to secure the Salween River prevented the majority of 56th Division from supporting the 18th Division in the Hukawng Valley. Additionally, because the 18th Division was both enemy- and terrain-focused, the remaining 4,000 Japanese combat troops in north Burma were further sub-divided between securing Myitkyina or destroying Allied forces. Even if the 18th Division could have focused all its combat power on conducting counterinsurgency or counter guerrilla operations, the likelihood that 4,000 soldiers could secure or control the approximately 150 miles long and 300 miles wide stretch of jungle terrain that represented both Kachin territory and DET 101’s base of operations is highly unlikely.<sup>134</sup> The 18th Division would have needed almost 8,000 soldiers to maintain the doctrinal twenty soldiers to every 1,000 inhabitants (there were somewhere between 300,000 to 400,000 Kachins) that the

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<sup>131</sup> Military Intelligence Service, “Soldier’s Guide to the Japanese Army,” War Department, Special Series No. 27, Mid 461, November 1944, 143. [Electronic Record]; Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Special Collections and Archives, Digital Library, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>132</sup> Fuwa, “Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley,” 57.

<sup>133</sup> Field Manual (FM) 5-0\_C1, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), B-17; The potential threat from the NCAC was 22-24,000 Chinese soldiers and almost 3,000 US soldiers; the combined total of the 18th and 56th Divisions was no more than 12,000 soldiers. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell’s Command Problems*, 31 and 130; Center of Military History, *Merrill’s Marauders*, 14.

<sup>134</sup> Peers, “Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma,” 10.

FM 5-0 identifies as the minimum troop density required for effective counterinsurgency operations.<sup>135</sup>

As the Japanese prepared to execute U-Go, DET 101 received guidance from LTG Stilwell, the NCAC Commander, to expand its guerrilla operations in north Burma. Under LTG Stilwell's guidance, DET 101 was told to grow its existing guerrilla force to 3,000 personnel and to focus its operations on Myitkyina.<sup>136</sup> Because the majority of Japanese combat power was already focused outside of Myitkyina and the Hukawng Valley, DET 101 had few issues with expanding the footprint of its existing field bases and operations in the area. To accomplish GEN Stilwell's guidance, DET 101's four area commands, FORWARD, PAT, KNOTHEAD, and TRAMP, increased the size of their guerrilla forces, relocated base camps, and extended their espionage and guerrilla operations to gather intelligence and isolate LOC to Myitkyina.<sup>137</sup> Without enemy interference, from February until May of 1944, DET 101 successfully expanded its guerrilla force in north Burma from approximately 900 to over 3,000 personnel.<sup>138</sup>

Even though the Japanese had gained total air supremacy during their 1942 invasion of Burma, they were unable to control the air beyond mid-1943. After scarce aerial resources were committed and expended to support offensives in the Arakan and Imphal, the Japanese were unable to challenge Allied air power throughout Burma.<sup>139</sup> Even with almost 500 operational aircraft in Burma in mid-1944, the Japanese were unable to gain anything more than temporary local air superiority in any specific area. Throughout 1944, the Burma Area Army appeared unwilling or unable to use its limited aircraft for close air support or to support aerial supply

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<sup>135</sup> Field Manual (FM) 5-0\_C1, *The Operations Process*, B-17.

<sup>136</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese*, 269.

<sup>137</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 139.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Joe G. Taylor, *Air Supply in the Burma Campaigns*, USAF Historical Studies: No. 75 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Research Studies Institute, Air University, 1957), 132.

operations.<sup>140</sup> Allied airpower made Japanese movement by rail and vehicle impossible during daylight hours and threatened communication points and military installations throughout north and central Burma.<sup>141</sup> In the Hukawng Valley, the 18th Division, unable to be resupplied by air, could not sustain operations. Without air support, the 18th Division sacrificed its maneuver and reconnaissance capabilities to carry additional supplies.

Even if the Burma Area Army and its subordinate elements had local air superiority, shortages of logistics and sustainment resources hindered Japanese operations throughout north Burma. For Operation U-Go, the 15th Army, realizing that it did not possess the requisite sustainment and logistical assets, planned for its combat divisions to carry their own supplies. As a result, divisions initiated Operation U-Go with twenty days of supplies and were expected to capture additional resources from defeated Allied forces.<sup>142</sup> In the Hukawng Valley, the 18th Division fared no better than its adjacent units participating in U-Go. The 18<sup>th</sup> Division had only two truck companies and one horse transport company to support its subordinate regiments—forcing LTG Tanaka to use combat soldiers for supply operations.<sup>143</sup> Additional logistics assets may have helped the Japanese to carry additional supplies or move forces but could not overcome supply shortages. Overall, shortages of food supplies lowered Japanese troop efficiency and increased disease and death rates throughout the Burma campaign.<sup>144</sup>

Although sustainment and logistical problems hindered long-term Japanese operations in Burma, Japanese forces fought remarkably well. Many of the Japanese Divisions in Burma were battle-tested units from China and were trained in jungle warfare. In addition to the 18th Division,

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<sup>140</sup> US Military Observer Group, “Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese,” 23.

<sup>141</sup> Chief of Military History, “Japanese Monograph 134,” 75.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>143</sup> Fuwa, “Japanese Operations in Hukawng Valley,” 52.

<sup>144</sup> US Military Observer Group, “Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese,” 93.

veteran units like the 33rd and 55th divisions had combat experience fighting in Malaya and China and had also trained in Hainan and Formosa prior to deployment to Burma.<sup>145</sup> The 56th Division, although not as experienced as the 18th, had also fought in the 1942 invasion of Burma.<sup>146</sup> Japanese divisions were also organized and equipped for mobility. Men and mules were used to carry food, ammunition, and weapons—advantages in jungle and mountainous terrain that prevented vehicular traffic.<sup>147</sup> However, increased mobility also meant that Japanese units had less firepower and sustainment resources. Rifles, hand grenades, machine guns, and mortars did not make up for the absence of artillery and anti-tank capabilities or ensure that captured supplies were available to sustain soldiers in the field.<sup>148</sup>

DET 101 used asymmetrical advantages in conventional airpower and equipment to overcome Japanese forces in north Burma. Without an effective air force, the Japanese were unable to prevent the Allies from executing aerial resupply operations. As a result, DET 101, with the help of Air Transport Command or ATC, established one of the most robust and effective aerial resupply operations in Burma. During the summer of 1944, the Air Drop Section delivered over 1.4 million pounds of supplies to different elements of DET 101 supporting the NCAC's Myitkyina Campaign.<sup>149</sup> DET 101 eventually established its own air element composed of liaison planes and small transport aircraft. DET 101's air element enabled the unit to execute its own aerial observation operations, maneuver its equipment and resources, and to evacuate wounded personnel.<sup>150</sup> Ultimately, the US asymmetrical air power advantage enabled DET 101 to sustain

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<sup>145</sup> McKelvie, *The War in Burma*, 18.

<sup>146</sup> Sacquety, "Evolution of OSS Detachment 101," 160.

<sup>147</sup> McKelvie, *The War in Burma*, 19.

<sup>148</sup> US Military Observer Group, "Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese," 14.

<sup>149</sup> Sacquety, "A Special Forces Model: Part II," 48.

<sup>150</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 381.

its forces, increase its maneuverability, and enhance its command and control capabilities in enemy and jungle territory.

Although aerial resupply enabled DET 101 to operate well-behind enemy lines, DET 101's equipment and tactics gave them superior firepower over the Japanese patrols they hunted. Because Japanese infantry units often used obsolete equipment, guerrillas equipped with M-2 .30-cal. carbines, submachine guns (.45-cal. Thompson and 9mm Marlin), .30-cal. light machine guns, and demolitions often overwhelmed their opponents.<sup>151</sup> Additionally, because the Japanese were dependent upon well-known trails and LOC to supply their forces, they were highly susceptible to ambushes. As a result, DET 101 and their Kachin guerrillas became experts in the jungle ambush. DET 101's second commander, COL Ray Peers, estimated that DET 101's casualty ratio from ambushes was one Kachin Ranger for every twenty-five Japanese killed.<sup>152</sup> In addition to inflicting heavy casualties, DET 101's ambushes created significant chaos in Japanese rear areas. With dwindling manpower resources, the Japanese had to maintain constant guards and could only move in combat formations.<sup>153</sup> Ultimately, "the threat of ambush made the Japanese taut and tense, slow, cautious and finally paranoiac."<sup>154</sup>

Although the Japanese eventually deployed a significant number of forces to Burma, the Burma Area Army and its subordinate Armies did not possess the resources to conduct offensive actions, defend Burma's borders, and conduct counterinsurgency or counter guerrilla operations. DET 101 capitalized on gaps in Japanese lines to infiltrate its agents and establish its bases deep inside enemy territory. Furthermore, the 15th Army's commitment to U-Go prevented the Japanese from maintaining the forces required to defend north Burma and combat DET 101's

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<sup>151</sup> C.H. Briscoe, "Kachin Rangers: Allied Guerrillas in World War II Burma," *Special Warfare* 15, no. 4 (December 2002): 38.

<sup>152</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 146.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

guerrillas. The absence of Japanese combat troops enabled DET 101 to expand its guerrilla forces and to threaten the 18th Division's position in Myitkyina. Ultimately, DET 101's well-placed and established guerrillas overcame conventional Japanese forces by capitalizing on asymmetries between the two forces. Air supremacy gave DET 101 the capability to operate deep in enemy territory. Meanwhile, well-placed ambushes with heavy firepower enabled DET 101 to effectively target Japanese rear areas and LOCs.

## **The Nature and Sympathies of the People: Opportunities and Perils for UW Operations**

The human terrain is a complex environment with many different components. Populations and sub-populations often have different perspectives, experiences, cultures, and preferences that shape their interactions within the operational environment. Burma's diverse population was no different. Perceived disparities from British colonial rule created significant opportunities for an occupying force; however, without the offer of independence, Burmese support for Japanese rule proved short-lived. As Japanese occupation and rule became more oppressive, portions of Burma's population became more likely to support the Allied war effort.<sup>155</sup> DET 101's UW operations in north Burma benefitted from the relationships the unit established with two minority groups in Burma's population: the Anglo- Burmese and Indians and the Kachins. The Anglo- Burmese and Indians, with similar cultural backgrounds to many in DET 101, were a unique subset of Burma's population that understood both the English and Burmese cultures. The Kachins, on the other hand, were a fiercely independent native tribal population with a warrior-culture that sympathized with the US and Allied cause. Whether working with Anglo- Burmese and Indians or Kachins, DET 101's ability to exploit the nature and sympathies of specific population-sets created opportunities to expand or enhance the unit's UW operations.

The people of Burma had mixed allegiances to Great Britain and Japan. Many were grateful for the improvements that Great Britain provided to Burmese infrastructure, education, and economic development; however, many others looked at the war with Japan as an opportunity to seize independence from Great Britain.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, British colonial policies had marginalized many of Burma's seventeen million inhabitants and helped to sew divides between the ethnic Burmans, Karens, Shans, and hill tribesmen like the Kachin, Nagas, Mons,

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<sup>155</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 57.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

and Chins. The country's ten million Burmans loathed the Chinese, pro-British minorities, and Indians and possessed a strong desire for independence.<sup>157</sup> As a result, the Japanese were initially welcomed as liberators; however, the Japanese had no desire to grant Burma independence. Dissatisfied with Japanese rule, there were many within Burma who sought to support resistance and Allied efforts to defeat the Japanese.<sup>158</sup>

Anglo-Burmese and Anglo-Indians, those of mixed English and Burmese or Indian descent, were eager to support British and American efforts to defeat the Japanese. Fearing Japan's occupation of Burma, many Anglo-Burmese and Anglo-Indians fled Burma and sought refuge in Assam, India.<sup>159</sup> Without employment and unable to return to their homeland, many Anglo-Burmese and Anglo-Indians were readily available to support British and American recruiting efforts in India. Because of their mixed parentage, many of these men spoke English and at least one Burmese language and were familiar with the customs and cultures of the different ethnic groups found in Burma. Additionally, many Anglo-Burmese and Indians were from northern Burma and had civilian and military experience in the jungles; many were former members of the Burmese, Indian, or British armies.<sup>160</sup>

Although the Anglo-Burmese and Indians represented a small portion of Burma's population, they provided significant opportunities for DET 101 to expand its operational capacity in the region. Anglo-Burmese and Indians possessed language, cultural, and jungle experience that DET 101 lacked. Most members of DET 101 did not speak the language, know the culture, or understand the people of Burma.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, as Caucasians in a predominantly

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<sup>157</sup> McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: 1942-45*, 7-8.

<sup>158</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 57.

<sup>159</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 9.

<sup>160</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 122.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.



Asian country, there were limited opportunities for DET 101 personnel to infiltrate Japanese-occupied territory without alerting the enemy.<sup>162</sup> Although many Anglo- Burmese and Indians shared many of the Caucasian traits that prevented DET 101 from blending into the population, as natives to Burma, they were far more prepared to interact with the indigenous population. Because many Anglo- Burmese and Indians spoke English as well as another Burmese dialect, they provided DET 101 with a method to communicate with the people of north Burma. They also taught DET 101 about the cultures of the Burmese, Shans, Karens, Was, Nagas, and Kachin people.<sup>163</sup> Many Anglo- Burmese and Indians were also familiar with the jungles and terrain features of north Burma. As a result, DET 101 initially employed many Anglo- Burmese and Indians as instructors in the detachment's jungle survival school.<sup>164</sup> Anglo- Burmese and Indians also helped DET 101 to expand its initial UW operations in north Burma. Throughout 1943, Anglo- Burmese and Indian agents, working with US advisors, established DET 101's first large field bases behind Japanese lines.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 357.

<sup>163</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 123.

<sup>164</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 126.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

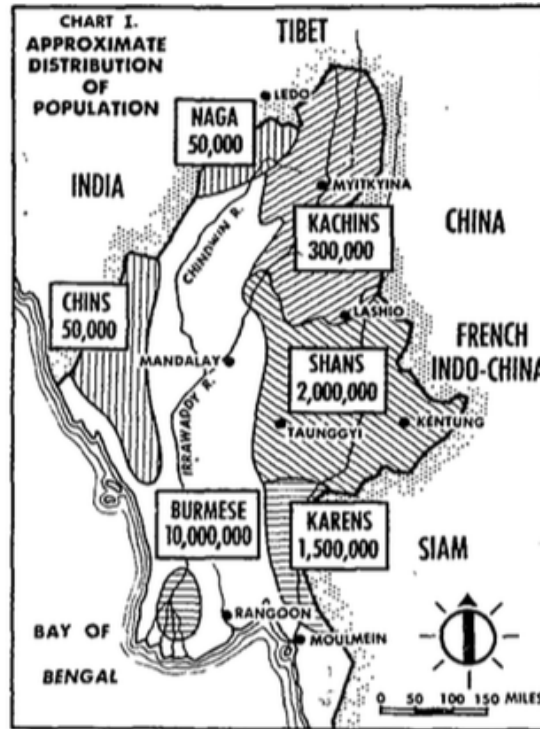


Figure 3. Burma's Approximate Population Distribution During World War II.

Source: William R. Peers, "Guerrilla Operations in Northern Burma," *Military Review*, Volume XXVIII, no. 3 (June 1948): 11.

In addition to the Anglo-Burmese and Anglo-Indians, the Kachins remained loyal supporters of Great Britain and the Allies. The Kachins were one of the five major hill tribes that occupied the highlands surrounding the Irrawaddy watershed in north Burma and had an estimated population of 400,000.<sup>166</sup> Historically, the Kachin people were fiercely independent, spoke their own language, were experts in jungle survival, and possessed militaristic traditions that were supported by the British. Prior to World War II, Karens, Kachins, and Chins were considered the most warlike tribes in Burma and were a considerable portion of the pre-Japanese invasion Burma Army.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>166</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 47.

<sup>167</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 7.

Many of north Burma's Kachins were ex-members of the jungle-trained and experienced British Kachin Rifles.<sup>168</sup> Many Kachins men were already conducting guerrilla operations against the Japanese forces in north Burma as members of the British-officered companies called Kachin Levies. The Kachin Levies were initially created to harass the Japanese in the area around Myitkyina and Fort Hertz. However, the Kachin Levies, lightly equipped and supplied by an ad hoc supply system from India, were hesitant to escalate operations against the Japanese for fear of provoking a significant enemy response.<sup>169</sup> As an ethnic minority as well as loyal supporters of the British, Burmese and Japanese forces often targeted Kachin civilians. The Japanese, aided by the Shans, tortured many Kachin villagers in failed attempts to subdue the Kachin population.<sup>170</sup> However, the defiant Kachins believed that loyalty and aid to the British would be rewarded with independence.<sup>171</sup>

Although the Kachin Levies were initially hesitant to increase tensions with the Japanese, they provided valuable services to early DET 101 operations near Fort Hertz. After initial operations with the Levies, members of DET 101 observed that Kachins were skilled in following “invisible tracks through the jungle or crossing towering peaks” that would otherwise have been significant obstacles to Allied or Japanese forces.<sup>172</sup> Kachin Levies guided DET 101's early operations and helped DET 101 to develop relationships with many friendly Kachin villages in north Burma. With the aid of their Kachin guides, “A” Group, DET 101's first long-range penetration element, established contact with a number of friendly villages and gained an

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<sup>168</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 49.

<sup>169</sup> Ian Fellowes-Gordon, *The Magic War: The Battle for North Burma* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 27.

<sup>170</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 33.

<sup>171</sup> Fellowes-Gordon, *The Magic War*, 58.

<sup>172</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 68.

understanding of the economic, social, and political situation in north Burma.<sup>173</sup> Although DET 101 eventually chose not to expand its relationship with the Kachin Levies, the initial access and placement the detachment gained from working with Levy personnel set conditions for future guerrilla and sabotage operations in north Burma.

DET 101's relationship with the Kachin people illustrates how an UW element can capitalize upon existing tensions and sympathies in the human domain to gain additional access, placement, and influence in a contested region. The Kachins were an ideal population for DET 101 to recruit and employ for an UW campaign; they were an oppressed minority group that was already supporting the Allies. The Kachins' continued resistance to Japanese and Burmese authority illustrated two of the conditions the JP 3-05 identifies as favorable to UW operations: the inability of a governing authority or occupying power to control its population and territory and the willingness of an opposition group to partner with the US or another sponsor.<sup>174</sup> Continued efforts to oppress and coerce the Kachin population showed DET 101 that the Japanese did not control segments of the population and portions of north Burma. Likewise, Kachin support to units like the Kachin Levies illustrated that segments of the Kachin population were already openly resisting Japanese and Burmese authority. Although DET 101's initial experience with the Kachin Levies lead the detachment to pursue Kachin support via other means, early combined operations showcased the Kachin potential for jungle warfare.

The Kachin people had very specific needs that could easily be addressed by the US or the Allied powers in Burma. As an indigenous, and in the eyes of the British and US militaries, primitive people, the Kachins lacked many "luxury goods" like salt, cloth, yarn, and clothing that could easily be obtained through existing supply systems.<sup>175</sup> Once DET 101 realized the Kachin

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<sup>173</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 379.

<sup>174</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations*, II-10.

<sup>175</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 50.

people's needs, they used humanitarian aid items, delivered by aerial resupply, to endear themselves to the locals.<sup>176</sup> When elements of DET 101 established a forward base near Naw Bum in the Mogaung Valley, they discovered that the Kachins were facing extreme food shortages. To address the famine conditions and to foster goodwill, DET 101 facilitated the delivery of rice and other necessary food staples.<sup>177</sup> Another item that proved instrumental to building rapport among the Kachins was opium. Without access to modern medicine, opium was seen as a treatment for many ailments.<sup>178</sup> Although DET 101 leadership was initially opposed to using opium to pay for support, opium was the preferred currency for many of the indigenous populations in north Burma. As COL Peers observed, "paper currency and even silver were often useless, as there was nothing to buy with money; opium, however, was the form of payment which everybody used."<sup>179</sup>

The Kachin people's needs created opportunities for DET 101 to build rapport and increase its influence in north Burma. As an oppressed and isolated minority segment of the population, the Kachins were unaccustomed to humanitarian or medical aid. The assistance that DET 101 provided, though often simple, greatly enhanced the detachment's reputation among the Kachin population. Although the term had not yet been defined during World War II, DET 101's efforts to support the Kachins were examples of what are now called civil-military operations or CMO. According to the JP 3-57, CMO are "activities to establish, maintain, influence or exploit relationships between military forces and indigenous populations."<sup>180</sup> Whether delivering

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<sup>176</sup> Troy J. Sacquety, "Wings Over Burma: Air Support in the Burma Campaign," *Veritas* 4, no. 2 (2008): 25.

<sup>177</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 54.

<sup>178</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 69.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 3-57, *Civil-Military Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), ix.

humanitarian aid in the form of food stuffs and additional sundry items or providing basic medical care, DET 101's work with the Kachin population, illustrated how an UW element could use shortcomings or needs in the human dimension as a vehicle to foster relationships with target groups and to expand power and influence. Lastly, although using opium as a currency was against US and Western culture, DET 101's leadership realized that the indigenous population of north Burma viewed this drug differently. Opium, as a currency and medicine, was a way of life in north Burma and could be used to expand DET 101's access to additional local support.

As the Kachins warmed to DET 101's presence in north Burma, the detachment began to seek out Kachin leaders as a way to expand the unit's influence in the area. Although DET 101 made many contacts with Village headmen, one of the most important Kachins to support DET 101 was Zhing Htaw Naw. Zhing Htaw Naw was an influential Kachin leader in the Hukawng Valley who had his own, poorly equipped, guerrilla force.<sup>181</sup> Through an arrangement with DET 101 leadership, Zhing Htaw Naw agreed to provide his approximately 150-man guerilla force to aid the Allied cause. In exchange, DET 101 agreed to supply, pay, train, and advise Zhing Htaw Naw's men.<sup>182</sup> In a period of three months, with the aid of Zhing Htaw Naw, DET 101's guerrilla force in the Hukawng Valley expanded to over 1,000 US-armed and trained Kachin men and boys.<sup>183</sup> Between January and March 1944 DET 101's guerrillas expanded to over three thousand.<sup>184</sup> As a guerrilla force, the Kachins posed a threat to Japanese rear areas and forced the enemy to increase his defensive posture.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 108.

<sup>182</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 54.

<sup>183</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 218.

<sup>184</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 19.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

DET 101's efforts to contact and integrate Zhing Htaw Naw into UW operations illustrated how the detachment used nonlethal targeting to achieve a desired effect in the operational environment. Targeting is the process of selecting and prioritizing targets, in this case a person, for engagement or action to achieve a desired effect.<sup>186</sup> In this case, Zhing Htaw Naw was an influential and known guerrilla leader in north Burma. Recruiting or incorporating him into DET 101's UW operations increased the detachment's credibility among potential Kachin recruits. Integrating Zhing Htaw Naw and his guerrilla force into DET 101's UW operations immediately increased the unit's guerrilla force and ultimately enabled the unit to exponentially expand its guerrillas operations in north Burma. Once DET 101 unlocked the Kachin guerrilla potential, the unit gained access to an indigenous intelligence network that was ready and willing to support UW operations against the Japanese.

Despite the many opportunities the Kachin people presented to DET 101 operations, they also presented many challenges. Although Anglo-Burmese and Anglo-Indians increased the detachments numbers and provided valuable knowledge about the people and the jungles of North Burma, they also brought existing prejudices that challenged relations between DET 101 and the Kachins they hoped to recruit.<sup>187</sup> The Kachins, likewise, had "no great love for foreigners; they hated the Burmese, the Chinese, and the British, with varying degrees of intensity."<sup>188</sup> The language barrier between the Kachins and DET 101 was also a significant challenge. The Kachin language, Jinghpaw, was uncommon outside of north Burma and few Kachins spoke English. Even with Anglo-Burmese or Burmese agents or interpreters, few spoke English, Burmese, and Jinghpaw—as a result, communication between DET 101 and many of their Kachin fighters was

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<sup>186</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 3-60, *Joint Targeting* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), vii.

<sup>187</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 373.

<sup>188</sup> Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, *Sub Rosa: The OSS and American Espionage* (New York, NY: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1946), 193.

difficult at best.<sup>189</sup> Another challenge the Kachins posed to DET 101 was cultural. As a warrior culture, the Kachins took few prisoners but did take trophies from enemy dead to celebrate their victories. As a result, the Kachin practice of collecting Japanese ears, though distasteful to DET 101 and the US Army, was widespread throughout Kachin guerilla units.<sup>190</sup> Although Kachin guerrillas were highly effective in the jungles and mountains near their homes, they had personnel issues outside their traditional home territories. Many Kachins were unwilling to fight outside their familial territories. Longstanding ethnic and clan divides also caused tensions between US-supported Kachins and Chinese forces. In one instance, when employed near the Chinese border over 110 Kachins deserted.<sup>191</sup> The Kachin deserters “waged war against the Chinese for three weeks. Though the Chinese reported seventy-five of their troops killed, OSS intelligence reports placed the number closer to 400.”<sup>192</sup>

DET 101 successfully navigated the nature and sympathies of the people in north Burma’s human domain to expand its power and influence in the region. Even though the detachment was woefully unprepared to interact with the indigenous population, its interactions with Anglo- Burmese and Indian refugees paid huge dividends. DET 101 found and used a niche segment of the population, with a similar cultural background, to overcome its training, language, and cultural deficiencies. Likewise, the relationships that DET 101 fostered with the warrior-like Kachin population, through targeted CMO and interactions with an influential Kachin guerrilla leader, enabled the detachment to expand its access and placement to potential guerrilla recruits and agents. Although the vast majority of DET 101’s interactions with the Kachins were positive, Kachin guerrillas created strategic risks for the US and Allied war efforts in the China Burma

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<sup>189</sup> Sacquety, “A Special Forces Model: Part II,” 47.

<sup>190</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 154.

<sup>191</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 125.

<sup>192</sup> Sacquety, “A Special Forces Model, Part II,” 50.



India Theater and illustrate some of the challenges that indigenous forces present for successful UW operations and campaigns. Overall, interactions with subsets of the indigenous population, that were sympathetic to the Allied cause, enabled DET 101 to expand and execute its UW operations in north Burma.

### **Conventional Operations: Achieving Unity of Action**

Conventional forces and operations often benefit from well-nested UW operations. Although conventional forces possess significant manpower and resources that often far exceed UW elements, they also have many capability gaps and limitations that can often be mitigated by indigenous or UW forces. In the NCAC campaign to seize Myitkyina, jungle-trained conventional forces struggled to maneuver through the jungles while maintaining their combat effectiveness. As casualties and losses increased, conventional Allied forces lacked the manpower to maintain pressure on their opponents. To enable unified action in north Burma, DET 101 bridged conventional force capability gaps and limitations and facilitated relationships with partner forces. Whether a resource, a capability, or a training limitation, DET 101 ultimately demonstrated how conditions that hindered or degraded conventional operations could often be overcome by supporting UW operations or elements.

The NCAC campaign to seize Myitkyina included conventional forces from Britain, China, and the United States.<sup>193</sup> The primary British forces that contributed to operations in north Burma were the British IV Corps and the 3rd Indian Division, more famously known as the Chindits or the Special Force. The British IV Corps, which launched operations into central Burma from Imphal, India, included the 17th, 20th, and 23rd Indian Divisions.<sup>194</sup> Although IV Corps was the largest British force near north Burma, its primary mission was to defend Imphal and therefore was a supporting effort to operations in north Burma. The Chindits, on the other hand, were light infantry that were specially trained in jungle warfare and long-range penetration operations.<sup>195</sup> The primary Chinese contributions to operations in north Burma were the 22nd and

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<sup>193</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 119-121.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>195</sup> Scott R. McMichael, *A Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, Research Survey No. 6 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1987), 13.

38th Divisions.<sup>196</sup> However, elements of the 30th and 50th Divisions also participated in combat operations with US forces at Myitkyina.<sup>197</sup> The principle American force in north Burma was the 5307th Unit (Provisional). The 5307th, commonly referred to “Merrill’s Marauders” or the Marauders, was originally created as an American Chindit brigade to conduct long-range penetrations.<sup>198</sup> Even though the Chindits and the Marauders had modest training and experience in jungle warfare, they had limited operational reach and success in the jungles of north Burma. The Chindits were too large to move undetected through the jungles and too lightly equipped to capture strongly defended enemy positions.<sup>199</sup> Likewise, the Marauders, also lacking heavy weapons, were dependent upon supporting Chinese units for increased firepower and indirect fires.<sup>200</sup>

Even though the Chindits and the Marauders successfully navigated otherwise difficult terrain, they struggled to maintain their supply trains because of animal losses owing to injury and exhaustion.<sup>201</sup> Both units required aerial sustainment assets and could not move their supplies without mules or horses.<sup>202</sup> Human casualties from illness, injury, exhaustion, and enemy action also plagued Chindit and Marauder operations. During the early days of operations at Myitkyina, the 5307th lost an estimated seventy-five to one hundred soldiers a day due to illness and

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<sup>196</sup> McKelvie, *The War in Burma*, 164.

<sup>197</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 161.

<sup>198</sup> McMichael, *Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, 14.

<sup>199</sup> Raymond Callahan, *Burma: 1942-45* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press 1978), 139.

<sup>200</sup> Gary J. Bjorge, *Merrill’s Marauders: Combined Operations in Northern Burma in 1944* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1996), 24.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

exhaustion.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, by the time they were pulled from combat operations, two of the five British Chindit brigades had less than 20% of their original combat strength available for follow-on operations.<sup>204</sup> By August 1944 the Marauders and the Chindits “were wiped out as an effective fighting force.”<sup>205</sup>

Although Chinese units struggled to meet Western Army standards, they provided significant combat power to Allied operations in north Burma. The Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions were conventional infantry divisions and had a combined strength of almost 24,000 soldiers. Each division was equipped with light and heavy machine guns and mortars and possessed divisional artillery units that included both 105 and 155mm howitzers.<sup>206</sup> Although the 22nd and 38th Divisions possessed some motor transport equipment, they primarily used mules, horses, and Indian ponies to navigate the terrain of north Burma.<sup>207</sup> The 88th Regiment of the 30th Division and the 150th Regiment of the 50th Division, which also participated in operations in north Burma, augmented weakened elements of the Marauders during the siege of Myitkyina.<sup>208</sup>

To ensure effective command and control between US and Chinese forces, US advisors were assigned to Chinese battalion formations and above.<sup>209</sup> Even with their heavier weaponry and US advisors, Chinese units were often less aggressive than their American counterparts. Throughout their movements to Myitkyina, the 22nd and 38th Divisions proceeded with such

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<sup>203</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 119.

<sup>204</sup> McMichael, *Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, 38.

<sup>205</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 130.

<sup>206</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 31-32.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>208</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 161.

<sup>209</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 33.

caution that LTG Stilwell questioned the Chinese commitment to Allied operations in north Burma.<sup>210</sup> At Myitkyina the Chinese 150th Regiment's attack on the city was a disaster. As COL Hunter, the 5307th's deputy commander, observed in his report following the siege of Myitkyina, "The Chinese cannot tell a Jap [*sic*] from a fellow countryman."<sup>211</sup> The 150th's Second and Third Battalions, unable to identify friend from foe, attacked each other, inflicted serious casualties, and withdrew from the weakly defended city.<sup>212</sup>

The mix of US, British, and Chinese conventional forces that conducted operations in north Burma possessed significant capabilities but also faced many limitations that challenged their effectiveness. Long-range penetration groups such as the Chindits and the Marauders had modest experience and training in jungle environments but were ultimately unfamiliar with much of the terrain features and jungles of north Burma.<sup>213</sup> With requirements to traverse restrictive and highly restrictive terrain, both units relied upon access to trails and drop zones to maneuver and receive supplies.<sup>214</sup> Additionally, because both units relied upon humans and animals to move supplies, they sacrificed firepower for maneuverability. Although aerial resupply helped to alleviate the volume of supplies both units carried, exhaustion and illness ultimately sapped manpower and reduced combat power.<sup>215</sup> As a result, especially in the case of the Marauders, they relied upon more conventional forces like the Chinese to make up limitations and differences

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<sup>210</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 213.

<sup>211</sup> Hunter, Report of Overseas Observations, 12.

<sup>212</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 123.

<sup>213</sup> Although the Marauders received jungle training in India, they had no prior experience in Burma. Between November 1943 and January 1944, the Marauders, under the supervision of British Major General Wingate, received jungle familiarization training near Deogarh, India. Upon completion of their familiarization training, the Marauders marched to Burma via the Ledo Road and initiated combat operations in February 1944. Center of Military History, *Merrill's Marauders*, 11-16.

<sup>214</sup> McMichael, *Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, 25.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

in heavy weaponry and manpower when facing the Japanese.<sup>216</sup> However, as was illustrated during the Chinese 150th Regiment's assault on Myitkyina, poorly trained or lead Chinese forces created their own issues that further degraded conventional operations. Because of the limitations and capability gaps that existed in the majority of conventional forces in north Burma, DET 101 was presented with several opportunities to demonstrate how UW operations and forces could enhance conventional operations.

As experts in the jungle, DET 101's indigenous forces were well suited and positioned to assist the Marauders as they advanced towards Myitkyina. In March 1944, DET 101 provided Kachin liaisons to Marauder elements to help guide patrols and gather intelligence. DET 101 guides "cleared trails, built bamboo bridges, located water-holes, and selected dropping grounds for air supplies."<sup>217</sup> As the 5307th advanced through the Hukawng and Mogaung Valleys and later toward Myitkyina, elements of DET 101 also recommended and tested routes. To support the Marauder advance over the Kumon Ridge, DET 101 personnel located and validated a route that enabled the 5307th to move its pack animals and soldiers through otherwise impassable terrain.<sup>218</sup> In addition to helping navigate north Burma's jungles, DET 101's forward staging bases presented opportunities for the 5307th to rest and refit. Bases in Naubaum and Arang became locations for resupply and medical evacuation operations.<sup>219</sup> By screening, guiding, and assisting the Marauders in establishing drop zones and resupply areas, DET 101 demonstrated how an indigenous UW force could enable a conventional force to overcome resource and capability deficiencies.

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<sup>216</sup> McMichael, *Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, 28.

<sup>217</sup> *War Report: Office of Strategic Services: OSS, Volume 2*, 385.

<sup>218</sup> Charles Newton Hunter, *Galahad* (San Antonio, TX: Naylor Company, 1963), 91.

<sup>219</sup> Charles N. Hunter, "Galahad: Intelligence Aspects," 1961, A8. (7282693) [Electronic Record]; Articles from "Studies in Intelligence", 1955-1992; Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, Record Group 263; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

As losses from casualties, illness, and exhaustion drained manpower, DET 101 provided guerrilla fighters to support and assist the Marauders as they fought the Japanese. In the Mogaung Valley, a group of two hundred Kachins, led by a DET 101 officer, ambushed and harassed a Japanese force that threatened to surround the 1st Marauder Battalion.<sup>220</sup> Later, as the 5307th advanced toward Myitkyina, US-led Kachin guerrillas provided additional manpower to the weakened Marauders. Almost three hundred Kachin guerrillas reinforced the 2nd Marauder Battalion, which had suffered heavy casualties.<sup>221</sup> As the 5307th and the Chinese 22nd and 38th Divisions fought to secure Myitkyina, DET 101 elements helped to isolate the town's Japanese defenders. North and east of Myitkyina, a DET 101 unit, composed of over one thousand Kachins, prevented the Japanese from reinforcing the town.<sup>222</sup> Also, by severing lines of communication to the Chinese border, Japanese reinforcements were unable to relieve Myitkyina's defenders. Likewise, additional DET 101 forces staged along the Irrawaddy River prevented the Japanese from fleeing Myitkyina.<sup>223</sup> Ultimately, the manpower that DET 101 provided to the Marauders, in the form of trained and armed guerrillas, helped to expand the Allied positions around Myitkyina and provided additional maneuver elements to counter Japanese actions.

In addition to supporting the Marauders, DET 101 helped the Chindits to overcome operational limitations south of Myitkyina. As the 5307th advanced towards Myitkyina, the Chindits launched an airborne operation to cut the Japanese 18th Division's line of communication from the south near the town of Mawlu. Between the 5th and 11th of March, the Chindits infiltrated 9,250 soldiers behind Japanese lines and cut the rail line from Mawlu to

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<sup>220</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 385.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 119.

Myitkyina.<sup>224</sup> To support the Chindits, DET 101 provided liaison and intelligence officers and guerrilla scouts.<sup>225</sup> DET 101's liaison element provided a valuable link to the Chindits and the NCAC headquarters. Without its own liaison element attached to the Chindits, the NCAC headquarters relied upon DET 101's liaison officer, Lieutenant Charles Stelle, to provide Chindit operational updates.<sup>226</sup> Meanwhile, DET 101's guerrilla scouts executed combat patrols to secure the Chindits' flanks as they advanced from the Henu railway to Mogaung.<sup>227</sup> With the help of DET 101, the Chindits avoided pursuing Japanese forces, prevented reinforcements from supporting the 18th Division at Myitkyina, and maintained effective communications with the NCAC headquarters.

Airpower played a significant role in Allied operations throughout the China Burma India Theater of operations. Before the fall of Burma, the United States used the Burma Road and the civilian China National Aviation Corporation or CNAC to deliver US lend-lease supplies from India to China.<sup>228</sup> However, after the Allied defeat in Burma, the CNAC and later the Tenth Air Force and Air Transport Command (ATC) established an aerial line of communication to China through the Himalayas, which aircrew often referred to as "Flying the Hump."<sup>229</sup> To fly the Hump, US aircrews faced not only the Himalayan Mountain Range but also had to contend with weather and enemy aircraft. Although weather conditions protected US aircraft from the enemy, weather was the largest threat to aircraft flying the Hump.<sup>230</sup> Further complicating the conditions

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<sup>224</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 197.

<sup>225</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 386.

<sup>226</sup> Sacquety, "Evolution of OSS Detachment 101," 169.

<sup>227</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*, 332.

<sup>228</sup> Otha C. Spencer, *Flying the Hump: Memories of an Air War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 21.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-39.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



for the USAAF, many of the Tenth Air Force and ATC pilots that flew the Hump had no prior experience flying in bad weather and few were experienced in instrument flight procedures.<sup>231</sup> Finally, whether an ATC or Tenth Air Force aircraft was shot down by the enemy, brought down by the weather, or crashed due to mechanical difficulties, aircrew that survived crashes in north Burma's jungles often had little hope for survival or rescue without indigenous support.<sup>232</sup>

Although efforts to fly the Hump consumed significant aircraft and resources, ferrying supplies to China was not the only way airpower contributed to the Allied cause in Burma. Many ATC aircraft also supplied ground forces as well. General Stilwell's NCAC command relied heavily upon aerial supply operations to maintain its forces. Air supply operations supplied the NCAC's Chinese forces along the Salween River and in Burma, delivered construction materiel and supplies to support the Ledo Road's construction, and maintained the 5307th's operations in north Burma.<sup>233</sup> Tenth Air Force bombers and fighters also supported ground operations in Burma. Even though Tenth Air Force had to allocate sorties to targeting Japanese aviation elements, beginning in the winter of 1943, USAAF elements committed significant resources to targeting Japanese railway bridges, ports of entry, refineries, and LOC throughout Burma.<sup>234</sup> However, Burma's jungle terrain severely limited the effectiveness of aerial targeting efforts. Without additional intelligence or observation from the ground, Tenth Air Force elements could not locate and identify targets or assess whether sorties were achieving desired effects on the enemy.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Spencer, *Flying the Hump*, 73.

<sup>232</sup> Dunlop, *Behind Japanese*, 147.

<sup>233</sup> Taylor, *Air Supply in the Burma Campaigns*, 8.

<sup>234</sup> Vern Haugland, *The AAF Against Japan* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), 207.

<sup>235</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 371.

In order to execute operations behind Japanese lines, DET 101 was dependent upon an effective relationship with Tenth Air Force and ATC. DET 101 needed ATC to deliver personnel and supplies, often by parachute, to DET 101's forward bases in the jungles of north Burma. However, ATC had limited resources to support a secondary, or even tertiary, effort like DET 101's intelligence and guerrilla operations. ATC's primary concern was maintaining aerial supply links between the Allies and China.<sup>236</sup> On the other hand, the tendency for ATC aircraft to crash in north Burma's jungles presented an opportunity for DET 101 to increase its relevance to ATC. Because many of ATC's aircraft were lost in Kachin territory, DET 101 was positioned to assist or rescue downed aircrew—a service that would greatly benefit ATC. In exchange for additional support, DET 101 provided ATC with the locations of friendly and enemy natives, created clandestine airstrips behind enemy lines to pickup ATC aircrews, and actively lead search and rescue operations. By September 1944, DET 101 elements had aided in the rescue of 180 Tenth Air Force and ATC personnel from behind enemy lines.<sup>237</sup>

In addition to rescuing airmen in distress, DET 101 also provided Tenth Air Force and ATC with valuable information regarding Japanese threats and targets in north Burma. During the winter of 1943, from positions near Fort Hertz, DET 101 personnel alerted Allied forces about impending Japanese air raids that targeted airfields in Assam, India. Likewise, during the campaign to seize Myitkyina, DET 101's nine air-warning stations provided the Tenth Air Force with the locations of Japanese fighter aircraft that threatened Allied aerial resupply operations.<sup>238</sup> DET 101 also assisted in the development of targets for Tenth Air Force air interdiction missions. Although the numbers vary by account, DET 101 provided somewhere between 65 and 85

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<sup>236</sup> Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 69.

<sup>237</sup> *War Report: OSS, Volume 2*, 387.

<sup>238</sup> Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 127.

percent of Tenth Air Force's air interdiction targets in north Burma.<sup>239</sup> From their positions in the jungles, DET 101 personnel provided the locations of supply dumps, rest areas, billets, and command posts that would otherwise have been invisible to aerial observation methods.<sup>240</sup> Whether alerting friendly forces about impending Japanese aerial attacks or providing targeting information, DET 101 enhanced the effectiveness of USAAF operations in north Burma.

Conventional force capability gaps and limitations created opportunities for DET 101 to demonstrate how an UW element could enhance or augment conventional operations and facilitate unified action. Although the Marauders and the Chindits had training in jungle warfare, north Burma's physical environment degraded the combat effectiveness of both units. However, with DET 101's assistance the Marauders and the Chindits accomplished their assigned missions; the Marauders seized Myitkyina's airfield and the Chindits prevented the Japanese from reinforcing north Burma. Indigenous forces, with knowledge and operational experience in north Burma, helped both elements to traverse highly restrictive terrain, gather and develop intelligence, and overcome manpower losses. By working with the Tenth Air Force and ATC, DET 101 secured additional support for its UW operations, saved many downed airmen, and increased the USAAF's ability to prosecute enemy targets. In the end, conditions that challenged conventional ground and air operations created opportunities for DET 101 to demonstrate how an UW element or operation could assist or enhance a partner unit's combat effectiveness.

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<sup>239</sup> Hogan, *US Army Special Operations*, 110.

<sup>240</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems*, 90.

## **Conclusion**

As large-scale conventional and SOF operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have declined in both scope and scale, USASOC has placed increased emphasis on special warfare—particularly UW operations. Recent UW struggles in Syria and Iraq have publicly illustrated some of the challenges associated with this form of warfare. With the publication of ARSOF 2022 and a pivot from counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense to UW, historical UW operations provide opportunities for contemporary leaders to better understand how to execute and employ UW to achieve strategic and operational objectives. This monograph used a case study of DET 101 to show how UW operations can succeed when they exploit favorable conditions in the operational environment.

To test the thesis that an UW campaign's success is determined by how well UW operations exploit conditions in the operational environment, this monograph examined four elements of the operational environment in north Burma during World War II: the physical environment, the character of the enemy, the nature and sympathies of the people, and conventional or supporting operations. The physical environment, the character of the enemy, and the nature and sympathies of the people initially presented challenges to conventional military operations but also created significant opportunities for DET 101. Conventional or supporting operations, on the other hand, were often complemented by DET 101 to achieve unity of action. DET 101's actions throughout the campaign illustrated how an UW element could provide an asymmetrical advantage to a degraded conventional force.

Restrictive and highly restrictive terrain, the limited availability of LOCs, or extreme weather and climactic conditions challenge all manner of military operations but also enable UW operations. North Burma's highly restrictive jungles and mountainous landscape prevented the Japanese from controlling terrain and canalized enemy movement. Unable to control the thousands of square miles they occupied, the Japanese could not prevent DET 101 from expanding its presence in north Burma. Additionally, because the Japanese had few LOCs to

support their forces, they were highly vulnerable to well-placed jungle ambushes. Finally, even though jungle illnesses negatively affected DET 101's formations, they also created an opening for DET 101 to increase its influence among north Burma's Kachin population. Medical treatment for guerrilla fighters and civilians greatly enhanced DET 101's rapport with the Kachin people and helped the detachment to expand its power and influence behind Japanese lines.

The enemy has a significant impact on the operational environment; however, he also creates many options for UW operations. An enemy that is focused on securing terrain or on a conventional threat may not possess the resources to address an UW threat. Although the Japanese initially possessed significant manpower advantages in Burma, the Burma Area Army's focus on conventional threats from China and India provided DET 101 with the freedom of action and maneuver to establish and execute its UW operations in north Burma. With both a terrain and enemy focus, the Japanese simply lacked the manpower to effectively counter conventional and unconventional threats. In early 1944, when the time came for DET 101 to expand its guerrilla operations, the preponderance of Japanese combat power was already allocated to Operation U-Go and defending key terrain in north Burma—preventing the Japanese from opposing DET 101's expansion. Ultimately, asymmetries between Allied and Japanese capabilities enabled DET 101 to maintain its operations and to keep pressure on Japanese forces in north Burma. Allied air supremacy and aerial resupply assets ensured that DET 101's subordinate elements were supplied and equipped deep in enemy territory.

DET 101's work with the Anglo-Burmese and Indians and the Kachin Levies illustrated how an UW element can use relationships with supportive groups to gain access and placement to a target population. Anglo-Burmese and Indians provided DET 101 with the initial cultural, language, and jungle training the unit needed to successfully navigate north Burma's physical and human terrain. Meanwhile, the Kachin Levies introduced DET 101 to a largely sympathetic subset of Burma's population: the Kachins. After DET 101 established contact with the Kachins, the unit used CMO and key leader engagements to expand its reputation and influence. Although

DET 101 eventually established a highly beneficial relationship with the Kachin people, Kachin guerrillas created substantial strategic risks when partnered with Chinese units. Without additional supervision or control, Kachin guerrillas, waging private wars against Chinese forces, threatened US strategic interests in the China-Burma-India Theater. Additionally, the Kachin tendency to gather enemy ears and widespread opium use presented cultural, legal, and ethical challenges to US and Western values.

DET 101's successful integration with Allied conventional forces in north Burma illustrates how an UW element can complement conventional military operations to achieve unity of action. Prior to the NCAC campaign to seize Myitkyina, DET 101 established an effective relationship with the Tenth Air Force that benefitted both units. DET 101's network of Kachin agents assisted the Tenth Air Force in identifying Japanese targets in north Burma's jungles and also worked to rescue downed airmen. In return for DET 101's assistance, the Tenth Air Force allocated additional aerial transportation assets to supply DET 101's subordinate elements in enemy-occupied territory. In addition to supporting the Tenth Air Force, throughout the NCAC's operations to seize Myitkyina, DET 101 helped the Chindits and Marauders to overcome capability limitations and filled manpower shortages. By providing liaisons, guides, and guerrilla fighters, DET 101 enabled the Chindits and Marauders to achieve their objectives. By establishing and exercising mutually supportive relationships with conventional forces, DET 101's UW operations helped the NCAC and the USAAF to achieve their objectives in north Burma.

This paper was not meant to provide a panacea for future UW success, but to provide a starting point for further discussion and research into some of the conditions in the operational environment that support and enable UW. As an historical example of UW success, DET 101's UW campaign in north Burma provided a starting point for understanding some of the favorable conditions that support UW operations. However, this monograph did not address many of the conditions in today's operational environment that may also affect UW. Although future UW

operations will certainly be used to support major combat operations, future UW will most likely be employed to support limited aims or objectives and will absolutely require coordination with US government agencies. Additionally, the likelihood that a future UW campaign will be constrained to a rural or jungle environment is unrealistic. As recent operations have illustrated, UW operations often include rural, desert, and urban operational environments. Lastly, advances in technology, particularly in command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems, create additional opportunities and threats to future UW that were unimaginable to DET 101.

DET 101's operations in north Burma helped to illustrate how an UW element can exploit conditions in the operational environment to achieve success. Whether overcoming extremes in the physical environment, capitalizing on an enemy focused elsewhere, working by with and through indigenous populations, or synchronizing efforts with conventional forces, the operational environment creates challenges and opportunities for UW operations. Although north Burma's jungles may now be replaced with desert or urban terrain, future UW operations will still need to exploit favorable conditions in the operational environment to achieve operational and strategic objectives.

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